

**HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION
FULL COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES
October 31, 2007, 4:30 p.m.
Council Chambers**

PRESENT

Trena Carter
Ian Kohen
Greg Lewis
Tony McClendon
Jason Staley
John Stroh
Gil Palmer
Rosalind Pegram
John Roberts

ABSENT

Jay Myers
Akua Ofori-Boateng

***** Meeting Called to Order *****

STAFF PRESENT:

Deputy Director Lorraine Smith and Secretary, Lula Young.

SECRETARY'S REPORT:

Secretary Roberts called roll then requested any corrections or changes to the September Minutes.

Commissioner Lewis moved to accept the September 26, 2007 Minutes. Commissioner Carter seconded. Motion carried.

TREASURER'S REPORT:

Secretary Young reported the September 25, 2007 ending balance as \$5,723.60 was incorrect. The correct ending balance for September was \$5,719.60. After one expense of \$50.00 for the NAACP Scholarship ad, the ending balance as of October 31, 2007 is \$5,669.60.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

Deputy Director Smith provided the Director's report and office activity. She informed Commissioners that she and Director Tinsley facilitated the diversity training for the 2007-08 Leadership Bartholomew County (LBC) Class. During her review, she advised that community members were recruited from the Gay/Straight Alliance, African-American and disabled communities to serve as resources at small group tables. LBC participants signed up to

participate in the small groups by their area of interest. The deputy director advised that the session was well-received and based on the evaluations, the class went very well.

Deputy Director Smith continued her review of the training, advising that she addressed the topic of diversity and why they were talking about diversity. Director Tinsley gave an overview of the demographics of Columbus and the challenges for the future. Deputy Director Smith shared that many of the participants were startled by some of the issues that are still being dealt with in the community. Commissioner Palmer commented that although some of the participants were unaware of the divide between ethnic groups, they were aware of the socio-economic divide. Participants were also surprised to learn of a Moorish Temple and an Interfaith Forum Council within Columbus community. Discussion continued regarding the deputy director's suggestions to aid LBC representatives with their mission to improve diversity within the class.

Deputy Director Smith reminded Commissioners of the Partners in Education Race Forum taking place on November 1, and that Commissioners McClendon and Stroh will be facilitators for the event. Other upcoming community events include the NAACP Freedom Fund scholarship banquet that she will attend with staff secretary, Lula Young. Commissioners were thanked for their participation in the Mayor's Community walks and meetings.

Deputy Director Smith reported that a disability in employment case was dual –filed with EEOC and both parties originally agreed to mediate. Upon receipt of the EEOC notification, the respondent attorney wants to mediate with EEOC. The deputy director completed her case update, advising commissioners that two cases previously scheduled for mediation may be withdrawn by the complainants and filed with the state office.

ACTION ITEM – PEACE BANNERS IFFC:

Deputy Director Smith addressed the photos of the Illuminating Peace banners circulated among the Commissioners and updated them on Chris Lemley's request for the Commission to co-sponsor the exhibit with the Inter-faith Forum. She advised that Mayor Armstrong and Judy Johns-Jackson had both approved the exhibit and that a final meeting will be scheduled to obtain approval from Mike Pope, facilities director, to determine if the banners can be displayed along the main corridor of City Hall.

Commissioners discussed the amount of support. Commissioner Lewis advised that the purpose of the display is consistent with the mission of the Human Rights Commission. Discussion ensued.

Commissioner Roberts moved to contribute \$150.00 to the Interfaith Forum to co-sponsor the Illuminating Peace banners contingent upon the approval of facilities director, Michael Pope. Commissioner Carter Seconded. Motion Carried unanimously.

ACTION ITEM – FUNDING LOCAL PROJECTS / DONATIONS ACCOUNT:

Commissioners discussed creation of a policy or criteria for funding local projects from the donations account. Deputy Director Smith suggested that Commissioners decide whether they would be able to make better decisions on financial support of local projects by having criteria to help guide and direct them.

Commissioners reviewed amounts previously contributed to local projects going from \$0 in 2005 to \$1,250.00 in 2006 and \$736.00 in 2007. Discussion continued with Commissioners voicing concern that the organization would become identified as a 'funding source' and not as a legal organization designed to handle civil rights issues. Commissioner Lewis recommended

compiling a list of suggestions. The following suggestions were made in the ensuing discussion:

- Set a limit for contributions.....Comm. Palmer
- Ask requestors what other agencies/organizations they have pursued....Dep. Dir. Smith
- Refer requestors to other local resources first.....Dep. Dir. Smith
- Consolidate requests for review on a monthly basis.....Comm. Pegram
- May not need to develop specific criteria but, suggest requestors come to a meeting and personally present their requests.....Comm. Stroh
- Initiate a deadline for submitting funding requests.....Comm. Pegram
- Supports personal presentation requesting funding, allowing Commissioners to see who is benefiting or asking for the contribution.....Comm. Carter
- Determine whether Commissioners want to set a budget or review requests on a case-by-case basis.....Dep. Dir. Smith
- Allocate a specific percentage of what have we made over/above actual expenses for the dinner to use for contributions.....Comm. Roberts
- Set the limit on the budget balance—do not allow reserves or treasury balance to go below \$4 or \$5,000. Whatever amount is in excess of that is money commissioners can utilize at their discretion. It doesn't indicate that all funds will be contributed, it merely identifies the maximum amount available for discretionary use.....Comm. Stroh

Commissioner discussion included continuing to use the Commission's mission statement as a guide when granting funding requests, to be vigilant in protecting the funds currently available and not lose sight of the organization's purpose. Commissioner Kohen requested a history of contributions over an additional seven years to provide a complete ten year review of past budget actions.

Commissioners Lewis and Kohen volunteered to examine the issues and prepare a status or recommendation for Commissioners at the next meeting.

Commissioner Carter moved to table items 9 – discussion of policy for funding local projects from the donations account & item 10 – discussion of the Columbus Cultural Connection website until the next meeting. Commissioner Palmer seconded. Motion carried.

Commissioner Palmer moved to adjourn the meeting, Commissioner Stroh seconded. Meeting adjourned.